

INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON THE HISTORY OF MATHEMATICS

Report to the Division of History of the International Union
of History and Philosophy of Science

August 1981

By Christoph J. Scriba, Chairman

At the XVth International Congress in Edinburgh Professor Kenneth O. May, founder of this Commission as well as of its journal *Historia Mathematica*, resigned from the chairmanship because of his poor health. For the period 1977 to 1981, the following Executive Committee was elected: C. J. Scriba (chairman), S. S. Demidov (Vice-Chairman), L. Nový (Secretary), K.-R. Biermann, P. Dugac, Judy V. Grabiner, I. Grattan-Guinness, R. C. Gupta, and K. O. May.

When on December 1, 1977, K. O. May died suddenly, the main task of the Commission was to ensure continuous publication of *Historia Mathematica*. J. W. Dauben, then Managing Editor, was appointed Editor, and Esther R. Phillips Managing Editor. Production of the photoready copy, formerly prepared at the Institute for the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology of the University of Toronto, was transferred to the offices of Academic Press in New York, to which Professor May had entrusted the publication as of Volume 4 (1977). Four issues a year (about 500 pages) have since been published regularly. Financial considerations have necessitated successive adjustments of the subscription rate, and so far it has not been possible to introduce a more expensive, but aesthetically superior, form of typesetting articles rather than printing from camera-ready copy. *Historia Mathematica* could not have been published without the continued effort of all its editors (including the book review editor Judy V. Grabiner and the abstracts editor A. C. Lewis), the contributions of many members of the Commission, and the support of Herbert H. Lehman College in New York.

The *World Directory of Historians of Mathematics*, first published by K. O. May in 1972, was issued by the Commission in a second, enlarged edition in 1978. Still essentially compiled by Professor May, it was prepared for publication by Laura Roebuck, his former assistant in the editorial office in Toronto. Enlarged to nearly 100 pages, the new edition includes more than 1200 researchers, writers, and teachers engaged in work related to the history of mathematics. Listings are arranged alphabetically, geographically, and by subject. The directory file is kept up to date by the Commission with a view to future editions.

Following the proposal made at the last International Congress at Edinburgh, a *Poisson Commemoration* has been included in the program of the XVth International Congress. It is being organized by our Commission, in contact with the French National Committee, and will occupy two sessions in Bucharest. Its purpose is to review the scientific work of S. D. Poisson (1781-1840) and its historical roots and impact on the development of mathematics and mathematical physics.

For the future, plans are being made to organize a summer school in the history of mathematics at the University of Toronto, possibly in 1982. Also, the International Mathematical Union has been approached concerning a better representation of the history of mathematics at the next International Congress of Mathematicians.

During the past years the Commission has received some financial support from the Division of History of Science of the IUHPS; this is gratefully acknowledged. While its journal financially lies in the hands of Academic Press, money for printing the new Directory had been put aside by K. O. May.

The Executive Committee met in January 1980 on the occasion of the 23rd conference on the history of mathematics at the Mathematisches Forschungsinstitut Oberwolfach, Federal Republic of Germany. Supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, the Chairman was able to pay a visit to North America where he had consultations with Professor May's former assistant and colleagues at the Toronto Institute, and with the editors and the publisher of *Historia Mathematica* in New York. In addition there has been extensive communication via circular letters and correspondence, especially between the Chairman and the Executive Committee, but also with numerous members. Without their continued advice and support the achievements listed in this report could never have been obtained.